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Preservation Technology and Training Board Meets In Natchitoches

E. Blaine Cliver

On April 12 and 13, 1994, in support of the National Center for Preservation Technology and Training, the first meeting of the newly elected Preservation Technology and Training Board was held at Northwestern State University (NSU) in Natchitoches, LA. Board members in attendance included Dr. Neville Agnew, Nicholas Gianopulos, Dr. Jon Gibson, Dr. Alferdteen Harrison, Dr. James Huhta, Dr. W. James Judge, Dr. Elizabeth A. Lyon, Robert Z Melnick, F. Blair Reeves, Carolyn L. Rose, and Frank E. Sanchis, III. At this same time and place a symposium, attended by representatives of numerous organizations, was held to solicit recommendations for future programs and activities that the National Center could undertake to strengthen its ties to the preservation community and provide strong national support (see following article). Both groups were involved in joint sessions and most meals were taken in common, providing a rich

opportunity for the interchange of ideas and the sharing of concepts.

After certain preliminary formalities, including the adoption of Robert's Rules Of Order and the introduction of each member, the Board began its first session by unanimously electing Dr. Elizabeth Lyon, Georgia State Historic Preservation Officer, as its Chair. This was followed by the unanimous election of Robert Melnick as the vice-Chair. Melnick is Professor of Landscape Architecture at the University of Oregon. With these proceedings out of the way the Board considered as its first item of business the definition of "Preservation Technology" as a means of defining the broader parameters of the goals and programs for the Center and what it is that should be the focus. Following an involved discussion, the definition from the Office of Technology Assessment's 1986 report *Technologies for Prehistoric and Historic Preservation* was found to be the most inclusive provided it took into account the process by which information is gained.

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Message from Chair, Preservation Technology and Training Board

The Board of the Center for Preservation Technology and Training held its first meeting in Natchitoches in an atmosphere of optimism and created energy provided by the context of symposium discussions. The Board members, representing diverse professional disciplines and preservation experience, yet reached a remarkable consensus on the challenges and opportunities presented by the new

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This is the second issue of a newsletter (formerly *Inside News*) devoted to the new National Center for Preservation Technology and Training in Natchitoches, LA. This newsletter was produced in cooperation with Northwestern State University of Louisiana.

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Preservation technology refers broadly to all equipment, methods, and techniques that can be applied to the discovery, analysis, protection, and management of prehistoric and historic sites, structures, and landscapes.

This would include those systems by which we not only protect and conserve our heritage but those used to collect and disseminate relevant information. Obviously, the use of electronic networks for providing access to information was seen as an important consideration. In addition, note was made of the purposes of the Center as defined in the enabling legislation:

develop and distribute preservation and conservation skills and technologies for the identification, evaluation, conservation, and interpretation of prehistoric and historic resources.

Board members concurred that the Center must structure its policies and programs so that the broad definition of preservation technology meets the purposes of the Center as defined by the legislation. To this end the Board is to provide leadership and advice.

To achieve these goals the Board recognized the need for the Center to have adequate resources. This focused on the need for future funding, including provisions for accepting funds from outside of the federal government. In achieving this, members felt that a clear identification of the Center's constituency would be of primary importance as well as the type of services that might be offered. Services such as a clearinghouse were seen as being important, but more than this,

including building relationships, the current symposium would be crucial to developing future programs.

In considering the operations of the Center the members felt that it should be limited to a skeletal staff at the outset and that focus be placed on developing a five-year plan for the new organization. It was recommended that the new Executive Director, when hired, begin this plan as a first agenda item. To accomplish its beginning programs the Center will have a staff of three professionals, beyond the Executive Director, and a secretary. Planning and building a sound program should be the main function of the staff in its first year, further outreach should include the staff of NSU and other elements of the NPS.

Considerable interest and discussion by the Board centered on the process of hiring the Executive Director. It was recognized that this position would be crucial to achieving the Center goals. Members stressed the need for the Board to be involved in the selection process and saw the need for consultation with the Board on the selection of this person, as specified in the legislation creating the Center, as being more than seeking a rubber stamp from them. The National Park Service has given assurances that it sees this consulting process as being proactive with the Board, involving them at several steps in the process and not just at the end.

Based on preliminary planning, the main focus of the Center's programs would be in three areas: research, training, and information

management. The Board recommended, as a first step, that participants in the symposium should continue their involvement in each of these areas of discussion beyond the current meeting and that the Board should await the input of the symposium before beginning in-depth discussions of its own. However, in order to provide some guidance so that a notice of available funding (request for grant proposals) could be issued for beginning a program of grants in the three identified program areas, certain criteria were discussed by which grant applicants would be judged. Because of the breadth of knowledge and experience of the Board members, this discussion led to the establishment of sound criteria, resulting in the notice being posted in the *Commerce Business Daily*, and sent to numerous organizations by the middle of May, with applications due by June 24, 1994.

During the second day of the meeting, the Board had the opportunity to visit the Old Gymnasium slated to become the headquarters for the National Center. Dating from 1923, this building, the oldest extant structure on campus, will require considerable renovation to incorporate its new function. The State of

Louisiana has agreed to begin planning to begin to renovate, in cooperation with NPS, the necessary renovations. At an estimated cost of \$3.35 million, it is anticipated that the building will provide spaces for training and laboratories as well as offices for the staff. As the planning for Center programs develops, the Board expects also to have some involvement with the progress of the rehabilitation so that by early in 1996, a new facility will be available to an anticipated increased staff.

E. Blaine Cliver is Chief, Preservation Assistance Division, and Acting Executive Director of the National Center for Preservation Technology and Training.



The Preservation Technology and Training Board at April Meeting in Natchitoches, LA. From left: Neville Agnew, Nicholas Gianopoulos, Alferdreen Harrison, Blair Reeves, James Huhta, Elizabeth Lyon, Carolyn Rose, Frank Sanchis, Blaine Cliver (Acting Executive Director), Robert Melnick, James Judge. Missing: Jon Gibson. Photo by Carol Gould.

Preservation Technology and Training Symposium

H. Ward Jandl

Following selection of the Preservation Technology and Training Board in February 1994, the National Park Service decided to bring together representatives of national preservation and conservation organizations to provide advice to the newly appointed Board. With the close cooperation of Northwestern State University, this symposium took place April 11-14, 1994.

Symposium participants, representing a range of disciplines and interests, were asked to formulate recommendations for the Technology and Training Board in three broad areas: preservation/conservation research, education/training, and information management. Another part of the assignment for symposium participants

was to identify the types of activities that might best support existing organizations and programs in the technical preservation/conservation fields.

The first morning of the symposium was spent in meetings with the Preservation Technology and Training Board, learning about the plans of the NPS for the Center and its short-term goals. Before breaking into smaller working groups in the afternoon, symposium participants agreed to the following definition of preservation technology, to guide discussions over the two days:

Preservation technology refers broadly to any equipment, methods, and techniques that can be applied to the discovery; analysis; interpretation; restoration; conservation; protection; and management of cultural property, including prehistoric and historic sites, structures, objects, and landscapes.

Participants also agreed that Center programs and services needed to be provided for the following individuals and organizations, based on an interpretation of the 1992 Amendments: federal, state and local resource preservation professionals; cultural resource managers; maintenance personnel; students (where there is a demonstrated need); and others working in the preservation field.

Specific recommendations were formulated by each working group and then presented to all symposium participants for discussion; in this way, there was ample opportunity to



Symposium at Natchitoches, LA, April 11-14, 1994. Photo by Carol Gould.

...the recommendations being made and to make modifications. After participants concluded their discussions on April 13, symposium facilitators and recorders prepared a written report summarizing the consensus recommendations. This report was presented orally on April 14 to the Preservation Technology and Training Board.

All participants expressed strong support for the broad goals of the Center and indicated a willingness to assist the NPS and Northwestern State University in meeting these goals and in promoting the Center as an electronic and information hub in the field of conservation and preservation. The basic recommendations of symposium participants are listed below; a more detailed discussion may be found in the final report of the symposium, available from the NPS.

Recommendations for Preservation/Conservation Research

1. As a first step, the Center should provide funds to compile a comprehensive listing of research facilities that have a preservation overlay.
2. Grants should be given to support a range of activities, and not reserved exclusively for scientific and technical research.
3. Research priorities for the Center should be: nondestructive discovery, characterization, and investigation techniques for cultural property; molecular identification and characterization; characterization of deterioration mechanisms; social, economic, and cultural trends; and technology transfer.
4. The Center should enlist professional organizations to identify long-

term research needs in various disciplines.

5. All results of research funded by the Center should be made available digitally on computer. Where warranted, research results should also be published.

6. The Center should establish a bulletin board on Internet to identify current research in the conservation/preservation field.

7. The Center's research facility should serve primarily a teaching function and be used to support training activities of the Center.

8. The Center needs to work closely with private industry to coordinate and stimulate preservation/conservation research.

9. The Center should consider organizing and holding research symposia on specific topics and publish the proceedings.

Recommendations for Training/Education

1. Training and education programs of the Center should extend to decisionmakers at all levels, including planning officials, museum conservators, and building managers.
2. The Center should identify training needs of federal and state agencies, local government officials, mid-career professionals, and others.
3. The Center should identify and evaluate existing training programs and develop partnerships on the national and international level with those already undertaking training efforts.
4. The Center needs to be aggressive in publicizing, marketing, and promoting training programs.
5. The Center should develop training programs by supporting a fellowship or internship program. Model

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center include those offered by the Gettysburg Conservation Institute and the Campbell Center.

3. The Center should attempt to match the training needs with an appropriate delivery system; for some training this may include telecommunications. For others, a "hands on" experience may be more appropriate.

7. Existing training or educational materials should be repackaged and redistributed to meet the needs of regional, state, or local use.

8. The Center should develop a mechanism to test the adequacy and effectiveness of any training effort and should document success stories and distribute the results.

9. The Center should promote symposia on specific topics, possibly resulting in a scholarly publication.

10. The Center should attempt to make training offerings as cross-disciplinary as possible and reach all layers of preservation.

11. All materials developed by the Center for training should be graphically designed in such a way as to be user-friendly and visually inviting.

12. The Center should consider stipend support to students for on-site study.

Recommendations for Information Management

1. The Center needs to be marketed, through industry and through participating organizations throughout the field. Promotional materials, press releases, newsletters, etc., should be used to raise public awareness about the Center and its activities.

2. The Center should serve as an electronic hub, providing a menu-driven

resource/continuum for organizations to learn what other organizations are doing. A list of potential databases is currently being drawn up and needs to be expanded.

3. The Center needs to make every effort to raise the comfort level of the preservation community with computers and databases.

4. The Center should provide funds to states and organizations to link with Internet and the Center. At the same time, the Center should not neglect conventional non-electronic means to communicate.

5. The Center should not duplicate publishing activities of other organizations; it should consider publishing results of research grants. Consideration should be given to CD-ROM and video-disks to disseminate information.

6. The Center should consider training programs that introduce preservationists to Internet and networked databases and the use of datasharing.

7. Consideration should be given to establishing a type of "underwriters' laboratory" issuing approvals of products meeting established standards.

8. The National Park Service should ensure that the Center's information management specialist has broad communication skills, capable of dealing with all disciplines and at all levels, and should have a demonstrated commitment to preservation.

H. Ward Jandl, Deputy Chief, Preservation Assistance Division, in Washington, DC, served as moderator for the symposium in Natchitoches.

Mr. Timothy L. Cummings, Board Member
National Alliance of Preservation Commissioners

Mr. Billy L. Cypress, Vice President
Keepers of the Treasures

Mr. Douglas Faris
Southwest Regional Office
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Dr. William C. Feist, Research Chemist
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Mr. Robert Field, AIA
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Ms. Karen Forbes
Federal Emergency Management Agency

Ms. Patricia H. Gay, Executive Director
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Ms. Mary Wood Lee, Director
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Mr. Norman Koonce, President
American Architectural Foundation

Mr. Marc Laenen, Director
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Northwestern State University

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Ms. Kathleen Byrd
Northwestern State University

Mr. Roy E. Graham, AIA
Consultant

Ms. Sally Sims Stokes
National Trust Preservation Library

Mr. Peter Stott
Consultant

Participants at the Symposium on the National Center for Preservation Technology and Training

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Center. They believe that technology and training should be broadly defined to include all of the preservation disciplines. They agree that the Center needs to respond to the needs identified by the Office of Technology Assessment and reinforced by the advocacy of the professional preservation community. These include research to improve technology, distribution of information about technology through advanced systems of information management, and training and education broadly defined to include the humanities as well as the more scientific fields.

The Board sees a broad and diverse constituency that needs to be

served. Her discussion emphasized the importance of a national perspective provided by a strong base in the national program in Washington and broad interaction with the preservation movement nationwide. They also see the opportunities presented by the Center's location in an academic setting in an area of deep and rich historical and cultural significance, not just to the region but to the nation. It is a pleasure and an honor to serve as chairman of such a diverse and committed group of professional scholars and preservationists.

—Dr. Elizabeth A. Lyon
Chair, Preservation Technology
and Training Board

A Few Facts About the National Center for Preservation Technology and Training

- The National Center was established by Public Law 102-575 (the National Historic Preservation Act Amendments) at Northwestern State University in Natchitoches, LA.

- A construction budget of \$3.35 million in FY 1994 is being used to rehabilitate a historic gymnasium on campus which will become home to the National Center. The facilities will provide office and lecture space as well as laboratory facilities. Construction is due to begin in early 1995.

- An additional \$1 million was appropriated in FY 1994 to begin to staff the Center, conduct necessary strategic planning, and fund research and training activities with partnership organizations and institutions.

- On May 16, 1994, the National Center announced the availability of preservation technology and training grants for FY 1994. Grants will be made to develop and distribute preservation and conservation skills and technologies for the identification, evaluation, conservation and interpretation of prehistoric and historic resources. Approximately \$400,000 will be awarded in FY 1994. Proposals must be received by the National Center no later than June 24, 1994.

- Five new positions have been created for the National Center in FY 1994, including that of Executive Director, training coordinator, research coordinator, information management specialist, and secretary. These positions will be filled by September 30, 1994.

END

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